

# Erik Poulsen

## 2003 Legislative Report



### Please keep in touch

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*Sen. Erik Poulsen represents the 34th Legislative District, which encompasses West Seattle, Burien and Vashon Island. He is the lead Democrat on the Ways & Means Capital Budget Committee. He also serves on the Technology & Communications Committee.*

**Summer 2003**

This past legislative session was the most agonizing of all my years in Olympia. With the worst budget deficit in state history, more than \$2.6 billion, and precious little political will to reform our outdated, unfair tax system — many vital state services were scaled back dramatically or eliminated altogether.

Despite our budget dilemma, powerful special interests pushed for more than \$100 million in new tax breaks that would have forced even deeper cuts to education, health care and other necessities. My scrutiny of these giveaways in the Ways & Means Committee led to their demise and laid the groundwork for closing unjustified tax loopholes next session.

One important victory was the passage of a major transportation funding package that will help repair the earthquake-damaged Alaskan Way viaduct, keep passenger-only ferries running, make our roads and bridges safer, and expand transportation alternatives. Our economy and quality of life will benefit from the courage of legislators who voted to temporarily increase the gas tax by a nickel.

The Legislature also acted to control the spiraling costs of prescription drugs. This was a crucial first step in what will be a long and difficult fight to reform our health care system, which is driving families, businesses and governments to financial ruin. The United States remains the last industrialized nation in the world that fails to provide uniform health coverage for all our children. This is unacceptable!

Thank you for the privilege of representing you. I'm eager to tackle the challenges facing state government and look forward to hearing your ideas and suggestions for how I can serve you better. Let's keep in touch.

Respectfully,

A blue ink signature of Erik Poulsen, written in a cursive style.

Erik Poulsen  
State Senator

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## *Capital budget*

As the lead Democratic negotiator for the state's capital budget, I championed a two-year plan that will create 14,500 construction jobs all around the state and enhance our schools, natural resources and public safety.

For the first time in the Legislature's history, we made a long-term commitment to higher education by approving the bipartisan "Gardner-Evans" funding proposal. The plan, proposed by former Govs. Booth Gardner and Dan Evans, sets aside \$750 million during the next six years to help ensure that Washington's colleges and universities have adequate resources to preserve their existing buildings and programs — and establish new ones — and can respond to the state's rapidly changing economy.

**South Seattle Community College** will benefit from that investment, with more than

\$17 million earmarked for construction of the Instructional Technology Center and \$2.6 million for renovation of the pastry vocational program structure.

Other 34th District projects funded in the budget include:

- **Historic Cooper School** – \$32,000 for the restoration of the Delridge building so it can become 37 live-work studio apartments for artists and an arts and cultural center that will house the West Seattle Kids Theatre, the Nature Consortium and the Polynesian Cultural Center.
- **Branson Beach** – \$269,000 for the acquisition of the Branson Park shoreline along Puget Sound. The six-acre property is west of downtown Burien.
- **Blue Heron Arts Center** – \$80,000 for the expansion of the oldest community arts center in Washington.
- **Vashon Park District** – \$12,906 for the district that was created by the Islanders in 1983 to provide park and recreational opportunities to complement the island lifestyle. Specifically, the money will go toward the stabilization and restoration of the Captain's Quarters at Point Robinson.
- **Trust Land Transfer Program** – This program is a

cost-effective way to fund school construction and protect our state's natural habitats. Established in 1989, it: 1) helps address the urgent need for school construction funding caused by Washington's rapidly expanding population and rising construction costs; 2) upgrades assets held in trust to generate long-term revenue for school construction; and 3) protects Washington's natural heritage. Through the program, some 272 acres of land on Vashon and Maury islands will be transferred to King County.

## *Subscribe to my E-Newsletter*

This year I would like to begin distributing a quick, informal newsletter via e-mail — an easy way for you to get the most current information about what's happening in Olympia and how it affects our district. If you'd like to be on the mailing list, please contact my legislative assistant in Olympia, Chris Lange, by e-mail at [lange\\_ch@leg.wa.gov](mailto:lange_ch@leg.wa.gov) or by phone at (360) 786-7667.

## Health care

### Prescription drugs

The cost of prescription drugs is rising at double-digit rates. But thanks to the outstanding leadership of state Rep. Eileen Cody, we were finally able to reach an agreement on how to make prescription drugs more affordable. We passed a bill that:

- Creates a state-purchasing consortium that will enable state agencies to negotiate lower prices with drug companies;
- Develops a discount program for the disabled and people 50 or older who have

incomes of less than \$36,000 (for a family of two);

- Directs Medicaid to seek a federal waiver as a first step toward creating a Medicaid-subsidized prescription drug program;
- Creates a pharmacy connection program that will help low-income people obtain no-cost or low-cost drugs; and
- Requires the state's Area Agencies on Aging to develop programs to educate seniors about how to safely use prescriptions.

Some 200,000 people in Washington have no prescription drug coverage and meet the income and age guidelines for the discount program.

that a "leaching" test is inadequate to detect contaminants and protect our water quality. The board said the test would not be safe to use in the Sea-Tac third runway project. The so-called "dirty fill" bill — which became law despite my loud opposition — essentially overturned the board's ruling.

For more information on the new law and what you can do to let your concern be known about it, please visit <http://cascade.sierraclub.org/southkingcounty/Alert-ToxicFillBill.htm> on the Internet.



## Transportation

Another great success for the Legislature was our passage of major transportation reform, which will improve safety and congestion on our state's highways, increase freight mobility, preserve ferries and terminals, and create construction jobs that can begin this summer.

The 10-year, \$4.2 billion new revenue proposal we passed includes a one-time 5-cent increase in the state gas tax, a 15 percent gross-weight fee increase for commercial trucks and a 0.3 percent sales tax on motor vehicles. All three take effect July 1, and the resulting revenue is tied to a specific list of projects.

### Passenger-only ferries

The passage of the \$30 car tab initiative resulted in devastating cuts to the ferry system, which recommended eliminating passenger-only ferry service altogether. These vital boats carry 230,000

people between Seattle and Vashon Island each year, keeping cars off the road, and benefiting our highways and the environment.

I know how much you rely on these ferries: They are Vashon's lifeline to the



mainland. And with the help of my seatmates in the House, I was able to persuade the Legislature to continue funding the boats for an additional two years.

Details of the plan — how often the ferries will run and how much fares will cost — are not yet decided, but rest assured that your passenger-only service will continue. It's imperative that we keep working on a long-term solution for this service, which remains threatened.

## Third runway

### Highline School District noise mitigation

I led the effort to secure an additional \$10 million in state funding to continue sound-proofing schools around Sea-Tac International Airport so the air traffic will stop rattling windows and nerves — and so students have an easier time listening to teachers and concentrating on their studies.

### Dirty fill

A year ago, the Pollution Control Hearings Board ruled

## Special session

### Meeting Boeing's demands

Gov. Locke called us into special session to address the nationwide bidding war for where the Boeing Co. will construct its new 7E7 aircraft. Thousands of high-paying jobs are at stake, as is the long-term economic future of our state.

In passing unemployment insurance changes and reducing Boeing's business tax rate if — and ONLY if — it builds the 7E7 here, the Legislature kept Washington in the running with other states vying for this lucrative project.

As a longtime crusader against corporate welfare and special-interest tax breaks, these were among the most difficult votes I've ever taken. Especially given the negative impact to unemployed workers and the devastating cuts elsewhere in our state budget. If we lose these Boeing jobs, the consequences will be far worse.

I am convinced that the Legislature's

### Getting rid of mercury

One of our resounding environmental victories this session relates to an issue many of you have written and talked to me about with great concern: mercury. HB 1002 begins phasing out consumer products that contain mercury and increases efforts to safely dispose of these items so the mercury doesn't leak into the environment.

Between 2,220 and almost 3,000 pounds of mercury are released into the state's environment each year. The bill will help control up to 30 percent of that mercury, according to the Department of Ecology.

actions this session will demand true reform of our state's tax structure, closer scrutiny of corporate give-aways, and better treatment of workers — including our

***The most common household items containing mercury are thermometers, fluorescent light bulbs and thermostats.***

*If you want to properly dispose of mercury-containing products, please take them to one of the Household Hazardous Waste collection sites in King County. Call the Hazards Line at (206) 296-4692 or check the information on the hours and locations of hazardous waste collection facilities in King County at <http://www.metrokc.gov/hazwaste/disposaloptions.html> on the Internet.*

teachers, public employees and people who've lost their jobs.

I'll keep fighting for them!

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